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ABSTRACT

This paper is one of a series on strategies for urban school improvement, which examines the interaction between pupil performance and family background. Instructional leadership, instructional emphasis, school climate, and teacher expectation are identified as factors which contribute to major differences in achievement levels among schools. Discussed are various reform initiatives and the formation of a promotional policy for the New York City Public School System. Implications for school reform are said to be based upon the following premises: (1) that all children are educable; (2) that the child's achievement potential derives from the nature of the school rather than the family background or neighborhood; and (3) children who experience little success initially in school become progressively less successful at each succeeding level of schooling. (JCD)

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"SEARCH FOR EFFECTIVE SCHOOLS"

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STRATEGIES FOR URBAN SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT WORKSHOP SERIES

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Mr. Edmonds has done extensive research and writing on the subjects of effective schools for poor children, desegregation, educational equity, and Black history.

INTRODUCTION

What I am going to try to do in fairly short order is to talk a little about the nature of the research that my colleagues and I have been responsible for at the University, a major conclusion, some of the methodologies that we have been using to talk about the outcomes of the research that NIE has been supplementing that goes to the characteristics, and some of the efforts to translate those findings into a basis for school reform in what is, as far as I know, still the largest school system in the United States.

EFFECTIVE SCHOOLS RESEARCH

I came to the University in 1972 and I mention that because Inequality was published in 1972. One of my first formal contributions to the University was the publishing of a fairly critical discussion of Inequality in the Harvard Education Review in 1972. That turned out to be significant because in many respects the criticism was directed to Carnegie and the fact that Carnegie was being one-sided in supporting Inequality and the Mosteller-Moynihan reanalysis of the Coleman data and a variety of other things that had, from my point of view, given far more credence to a single side of an important question that I thought the state of the art at the time justified.

The question that is at the heart of this for me is, "In the United States, what is the interaction between pupil performance and family background?" And if there is an interaction, is it a correlation or is it a causal interaction? I take this to be a fairly serious question because if you conclude, as does a good deal of the literature, that family and social class causes pupil performance, then the only way to do something about that is to intervene in the nature of the American family, at least those families whose characteristics we have reservations about. If you conclude, on the other hand, that it is merely a correlation, and that social class and family background are not, in fact, causes of performance, then you don't have to intervene in the life of the family. You intervene instead in the nature of the way schools respond to the different families that they are supposed to serve.

I concluded at the time that you could answer that question in a very straightforward way, by merely looking to see whether or not there are, in fact, any schools at all in the United States in cities serving stereotypical pupil populations in inner cities that are doing for those children what their parents want them to do when they send them to school; and, that furthermore, that pupil performance as measured on standardized achievement tests demonstrates that those children are acquiring school skills sufficient to give them very realistic and legitimate choices about whether or not they choose to go on at each of these successive levels of school.

So the research that we organized early on, and my major colleague in this regard is John Frederiksen, were a set of research activities that were designed to collect data that just allowed us initially to answer the identification question; that is, what do we need to know and what sort of analyses do we need to carry out in order just to answer the prior question which is, "Are there, in fact, schools in American cities that have come very

close to abolishing the traditional or conventional interaction between pupil performance, social class and family background?"

We started that by doing an analysis of all of the schools in the Detroit, Michigan model cities neighborhood because that had the advantage of controlling for income and social classes. Since, as you know, there are fairly strict income requirements for neighborhood eligibility for model cities, the fact that we studied all of the schools in the model cities neighborhood in Detroit meant that we were studying schools that came fairly close to serving, if not homogeneous, then highly similar, at least demographically similar, pupil populations.

We did end by finding that there were some quite dramatic achievement differences that characterized those sets of schools. We took sufficient encouragement from that to recognize the limitations of trying to answer the question that way, that is, obviously the methodological defects in approaching the issue; that we think that the answer you are offering is too primitive to really be persuasive. But at least the answer was persuasive enough so that we could go on.

The next question we raised for ourselves went to the issue, "If Coleman and his colleagues had used a more sophisticated, a more insightful, or a more disinterested approach to the analysis, even the data that had been collected for the Equality of Educational Opportunity Survey (EEOS), would they have succeeded in identifying individual schools that met the standard of effectiveness that we imposed?" That is one that said we were looking for schools that served a predominantly poor pupil population and had come very close to abolishing this interaction between achievement and family background.

In fact, we used Jencks' tapes from the EEOS reanalysis that is the substantive basis of Inequality. Since those tapes were in Cambridge, we went to Jencks and his colleagues and obtained the original EEOS tapes that they had used. We started in only the northeast quadrant, because given the nature of the cities and schools that are to be found in the northeast quadrant of the United States, that constituted a sufficient inquiry for us. We merely put the question: "If you subjected the original EEOS data to an analysis that focused more on disaggregating the descriptions of social class and the descriptions of achievement, what results might you get there?"

By the most conservative estimate we found 55 schools in the northeast quadrant that met a fairly rigid standard of achievement, with the achievement requirement being that the individual school had to have come very close to abolishing your ability to predict social class on the basis of the examination of achievement data.

The main value of the EEOS evaluation was to determine whether or not there was some evidence to persuade you that you really ought to rethink the methodological question, that is the underpinning of the way you approach collecting the data, and then analyzing the data. We went on from that because, again, the answer we got, while we recognized the limitations, was sufficiently encouraging so that it clearly implied that we ought to go on with the inquiry.

We went on from there to rethink the whole issue ourselves. One of the first things we decided to do was to collect their incomes, social class, family background data.

As you may recall, the Coleman social class data derives from what I call the infamous or notorious nine item scale. And I don't think that is an appropriate way to collect data. The Coleman people gave all of the kids in the EEOS survey a single sheet of paper that had nine items on it -- encyclopedia data, daily newspaper and so on -- and asked the kids themselves to check the number of those items that were in the home. And the assignment of social class, that is the underpinning of the EEOS and Inequality, derived from that number of items the kids checked. That is, if they checked that they had three of those items in their home they got assigned one social class. If they checked that they had four, they got assigned another social class and so on. I don't happen to think that is a very sophisticated basis for answering an important set of questions like this, but nevertheless it does, in fact, constitute the primary undergirding of the analysis in the United States in particular, and the western part in general, of what is presumed or supposed to be the interaction between pupil performance and family background.

We approached the question first by obtaining permission to open the pupil folder. We studied children in grades three through seven inclusive and decided that we would use the Lansing, Michigan school district as a sort of a model of the way you really ought to approach the issue.

The pupil folder limited us to record for those children the number of children in the family, the birth order of the child that we were recording data on, the primary language spoken in the home, the family occupation, the parents' occupation, the parents' education and a variety of other data that you might be able to obtain. We opened every one of the pupil folders, except on the children in special ed., and recorded the data to which I refer.

We also recorded the data that revealed the child's achievement score for every standardized test they had taken since they entered the school system. And, of course in the instance of the State of Michigan it meant that there was another body of achievement data that could be added because the State of Michigan keeps annual assessed standardized state based criterion reference achievement batteries in all children in the State of Michigan in the fourth grade and in the seventh grade. They give it early in the school year, so it is really a measure of pupil performance remaining essentially from the third grade and the sixth grade.

We didn't depend on the assessment data, but we did use the assessment data as a sort of a cross reference to see whether or not the summary of achievement that we had obtained from the pupil folders stood up when you compared it to the very substantial indices you got if you added the Michigan assessment data. We did that by sending off the forms, that we had given the people in the school districts where we were doing this, to Iowa City where the subcontractor for the Michigan assessment test added the assessment data to the achievement data. We already had removed the pupil's name, substituted

for it a unique number which we had already generated and then sent the form along to us in Cambridge.

In Cambridge we took the form, which by then contained the family background data from the folder, the achievement data from the folder and the achievement data from the Iowa tapes on the assessment battery, to the Harvard Library. Here, using a very substantial collection of the census data and using the address which remained on the form, we could then add the assessed property value of the house the child lived in, whether it was rental or owned, whether it was owner-occupied, the racial composition of the building, the racial composition of the block, the age and condition of the plumbing in the house, the number of people per room and on and on.

We went through more than 25 data bits, and only after doing all of that did we assign social classes. We had done all of that solely for the purpose of assigning social class, because the question we wanted to ask was "What is the interaction between pupil performance and the pupil membership in a social class subset?" And it clearly seemed to us that a very critical question in that regard was to have a very accurate basis for the assignment of social class and defending the assignment that you wanted to make. I think that the assignment we made is not only defensible one child at a time, I think it is also defensible in terms of the basis we used for assigning children to social class subsets, of which there were five, ranging from poor to middle class.

We then analyzed those data, focusing on single schools, analyzed the interaction between pupil performance as measured by the standardized test whose results we had recorded and pupil membership in the social class subsets, to see whether or not we would ever find any school in which examination of the achievement data came very close to obscuring pupil membership in a social class subset, because that is how we defined the effect in school. The answer is yes, we did.

We have, as we had earlier discovered in Model Cities and in EEOS, sustained our ability to demonstrate that, at least numerically, there do in fact exist schools that are instructionally effective in inner city circumstances for inner city children in at least delivering to them basic school skills as measured on the standardized measures for reading and math. We, incidentally, since then have extended our analysis to include New York City, but I will say something about that later on. The work culminates in our wanting to recommend certain methodological approaches to this question, because we do think that anybody who wants to can reproduce the analysis that we have been doing, and in fact we think that you can do it without spending the amount of money that we had to spend in order to do it.

Incidentally, the identification phase of the work was paid for primarily by the Carnegie Corporation. A grant from the National Institute of Education came in only at the point at which we turned away from the quick

identification question to the question of what is the institutional/organizational difference between the schools that met our standard of effectiveness as contrasted to those that did not.

Now, in order to answer that question we used a fairly conventional approach. We obtained, trained and fielded a group of men and women who were our school observers. Then we went back to the schools that had met our standard of effectiveness, paired those schools with ineffective schools serving analogous demographically similar pupil populations, and then studied the full range of institutional/organizational characteristics that describe school size, pupil/teacher ratio, per pupil expenditure, ethnic income, some class character of the pupil population and so on. (We have systematically excluded experimental schools and private schools and schools that are otherwise esoteric, so that we are left with schools that I would be willing to say are fairly pedestrian on the face of it, serving sort of garden variety of urban pupil population.)

In any case, the question the NIE supported us to go after did have to do with the organizational/institutional characteristics that distinguish between the two sets. And we did reach, both in the Michigan studies and subsequently in the New York studies, fairly firm conclusions. We had those conclusions by the time we went to New York, but I am going to say in a minute what we did in New York that did reinforce and verify those conclusions.

After the business of our people doing interviews of teaching personnel, interviews of special instructional personnel, interviews of principals, interviews of paraprofessionals, interviews of the full range of people in the school and then following the interviews by subsequently going back to just observe the life of the school, to observe the life of the classroom, we did describe with some specificity the conclusions that we were working from.

And those, the major differences between the two sets of schools, derived from just five characteristics (that aren't so narrow that one can't subsume a variety of other things that are under them). The first characteristic is the style of instructional leadership in the building as practiced by the principal. The second is whether or not the school has instructional emphasis and not just as one, but that the data is understood and subscribed to. The third is what the climate in the school is, that is, is it clean, is it safe, is it orderly, is it a fairly serious place given what those adults and children are doing there. The fourth is what is the sort of implied expectation that derives from the way teachers comport themselves in the classrooms.

(Footnote: I fashioned it that way because those of you who may have been here when Maureen Larkin was here may have noted that while Milwaukee is doing what it is doing on the basis of precisely the work that I am discussing, Maureen does approach particularly this expectation question very differently. Maureen has designed an intervention program that tends to go directly after attitude and mind set; that is, Maureen does want to deal explicitly with how teachers feel about the children they teach and what they think about the children they teach and, therefore, the interaction between the professional behavior and what they feel or what they think.

I don't do that. I do instead deal with the way people behave and my ability to interpret the import of the behavior. So that if we are in the classroom observing classroom comportment, we are interested in whether or not the teachers are grouping children. If they group them, does the grouping have a significant relationship to either the racial, income, social class or family background of the children in the room and thereafter does the teacher treat the two groups any differently? And as you observe the difference, do the professional behaviors convey a set of expectations that are substantially different for the one group as contrasted to the other? If they do, that is if the behavior clearly implies that one group of children are not expected to attain whatever their minimum is for mastery of that grade, then we would interpret that as inappropriate expectations. Whereas if the behavior clearly intends that all of the children in the room are expected not only to profit from the activity that is going on, but that that profit is going to bring them to the minimum mastery that is prerequisite to what we like to call continuous progress then we call that appropriate expectations.

I only want to distinguish sharply; I am not a critic of the way Maureen and her colleagues have approached that issue in Milwaukee. In fact, in some respects I didn't have anything to do with it but I am very glad they have chosen to do that because I am interested in the question. My reason for not dealing directly with the issues of attitude and mind set is just that I feel insecure in doing that. I feel much more secure trying to describe the basis for interpreting the behavior that is being observed as contrasted to trying to deal with the way people feel or what it is they think. So I am as interested in it as you are, the sort of differences that may derive from these fairly dramatic differences in approaching what you do about the question.)

In any case, back to the issue at hand which had to do with the characteristics. The fifth characteristic would be the presence, use and response to standardized instruments for measuring pupil progress; that is to say, does the school have standardized achievement tests? Does it give them systematically and if not annually either more often than that? And most importantly, what do they do with what they get?

If we reached a firm conclusion, it was this: The major obstacle to institutional improvement for those children who are the focused object of this inquiry is the inability of they and their parents to persuade school people to ever do differently whatever it is that they just did, despite the fact that what they just did was demonstrably disastrous for a very significant portion of the pupil population.

The stereotypical example I would like to use is that of my children who are in school in New York City and go to school in Lexington, Massachusetts which is a bedroom suburb for Harvard and MIT. A few years ago there was a very modest decline in the reading and math courses. No parent objected, no parent complained. School people, entirely on their own initiative, scurried around faced with the fact that they were doing something wrong because since the achievement data had revealed a very modest slip in the rate of continuous achievement for these children, then there must be something wrong with what the school was doing. (Incidentally, over the last decade in the midst of all of the discourse on the SAT score, SAT scores in Lexington, Massachusetts have not only never fallen, they continued to rise through the whole of the period.)

The point I am trying to make is that upper middle class suburban schools in the United States, or schools anywhere, serving predominantly middle class pupil populations, recognize the necessity of modifying their own institutional behavior when achievement data revealed any observable or substantial decline in what is regarded as a politically acceptable rate of gain for the children they are supposed to serve.

I will shift the setting, but not the circumstance. That is to say, go to the situation in which children in a school that is predominantly poor, or even is substantially poor, take a set of standardized achievement tests, reveal that there has been some decline in achievement scores either for the whole of the pupil population if it is homogeneously poor, or for that portion of the pupil population that is poor if it is a mixed school. What do school people do under those circumstances, and you know as well as I do what they do.

They plan to do again what it is they just did, when I can professionally promise them that if they do it things will either stay as bad as they are, or get worse. Now for me there is no great mystery in being able to say that obviously if people comport themselves that way, the interaction between pupil performance and family background will not only continue to be depressing, it will get increasingly pathological. As a matter of fact, it does.

THE NEW YORK SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

In any case, initially what we were content to do was simply to publish those results and describe those results in a fairly straightforward and garden variety way, except that a change did occur because in the summer of 1978 New York City got a new Chancellor. The Chancellor-Elect, Frank Macciorola, who is a Professor of Law and Political Science and describes himself as not being a school person, for a variety of reasons which remains somewhat mysterious to me, asked me to come to New York City and become the instructional person.

Now the truth of the matter is, left to my own devices, I don't know as I would have altogether abandoned the ivory tower, or the fairly quiet environment of Harvard Yard, but Frank's proposition was couched in language that implied that if you think you are so smart, you have to quit hanging around here sharing these things with people who are primarily interested in whether or not you use path analysis as the basis for your statistical approach to methodology.

In the 1978 school year, I started dividing my time between New York City and Cambridge and became increasingly sensitive to spending more and more of my time in New York. Now not only do I spend almost all of my time there, but as I have remarked earlier my children are in school in ISS 88 in Brooklyn and, with the mere proviso as I told my wife when we discussed making this move, that I will only have to do it once. I hope that turns out to be the case because I will tell you that while I think we have a good deal to show about what is going on in New York, I sure understand now why I prefer writing and thinking of things to trying to actually do them.

I guess the distinction I have drawn is this: the life of the university is an effort to win friends and influence people, that is to say that everything you do with the university turns on the written word. It doesn't matter at the university who you talk to. It only matters what you just published. In fact, if you haven't published anything, there isn't anything to talk about. But the whole of the publishing enterprise is an effort for you to persuade the world to see itself the way you do. I mean, that is the whole point of that voluminous literature that we produce. Therefore the university, at least Harvard, is incredibly respectful of your need to think about what it is you either just wrote or plan to write next.

Whereas, when one becomes, as I am now, an administrator of a major school system, one writes hardly anything at all and that matters is not who you talk to, but who you just talked to; because, in fact, what has to happen in the school system is that you must decide what to do right then on the basis of what you know right then, because the nature of the enterprise doesn't wait on your feeling as secure as you would like to before you decided what you think you want to do. (I think that is an occupational hazard. I don't think it is fatal, but I do think at the time I at least find it somewhat debilitating.)

In any case, what I wanted to end this with were some brief summaries of what I have tried to do given the charge of trying to translate almost immediately these conclusions into a basis for approaching the issue of reforming New York schools. And just briefly in context I will tell you this: I did get in New York something that I have not yet sorted out, in terms of analysis, but those of you particularly who are process people will recognize the importance of these background variables as they contribute to the dynamics of what is going on. Shortly after arriving in New York City I was editorially endorsed in the perspectives I represent by the major newspapers in New York, including the "New York Times." The major university spokesmen in greater New York, that is at Columbia and NYU and elsewhere, did say that they fully subscribed to these conclusions and their import and these perspectives. The major parent organizations in the city, and they are very formidable organizations, said the same thing. And as a matter of fact, last but by no means least, so did the teacher union.

Now obviously the dynamic of all of this would surely have been incredibly different if any one of those had started out by being a public critic. Suffice it to say that you may take it as a given that that is a backdrop against which all of this is proceeding, although I must tell you that the day to day quality of my interaction with those various constituencies has turned out to be a good deal more abrasive with some than it is with others and I will let you figure out who that is.

In any case, the things that happen down in the city in the school system that were both centrally designed to reorganize the way the system approached teaching and learning and things that are specific, and that are specifically intended to illustrate the points that are inherent in this discussion. The first thing I did do in New York City was to write and

publicly disseminate this sort of a pedagogical premise; that is, I did publicly disseminate the document, the fundamental teaching and learning premises from which all decisions in the New York City schools were supposed to flow. Given the fact that my colleagues include 60,000 teachers and administrators in more than 1300 buildings and obviously a very, very substantial bureaucracy, which you here probably can appreciate more than they do in Onion City, Texas, surely it must be clear to you that there must be some teacher in New York somewhere who doesn't really know about the pedagogical goal. And unlikely, though it may seem, there may also be one other teacher who even though he or she knows about the party line does not fully subscribe to it. In any case, we could do that if I think it is a critical issue and, in fact, a great deal of what I am going to say was designed to do for the central administration what is implied in what you ought to do with a school if you are going to exploit the five characteristics that we have concluded made the most difference.

The other major thing I should tell you is that in the research context, we have firmly concluded, as Mike Cohen of N.I.E. and I have discussed more than once, what we are working with are school effects as contrasted to teacher effects or any of the others. That is, we firmly conclude that what is under discussion are the circumstances that contribute to pupil acquisition of school skills and the measure of gain is progress for precisely those children who traditionally profit least from the way we do things.

Another premise is that the critical variable in that analysis has to be fixed on the school itself and that if you are going to do anything, if you are going to try for an intervention, it ought to be a school intervention because the school effect is more powerful than the family effect. It is more powerful than the neighborhood effect. It is more powerful than the school district effect and it is more powerful than the teacher effect, which is not to demean any of those other effects, all of which play a critical and essential role in how well children do in school. But going to the basic question of pupil acquisition of the minimum bodies of knowledge and sets of skills that are prerequisite to continuous progress, the most powerful element, both for purposes of analysis and intervention, is the school itself, conceived of as an entity, which obviously has disparate elements, but nonetheless conceived of and treated as an entity.

There were substantial changes in personnel in New York, because, frankly, a part of the import of doing this is that you end up subjecting your colleagues to a sort of pedagogical litmus test. I mean some people are much more prepared to subscribe to the import of this discussion than others and unless you have an inordinate amount of time in order to persuade people to join you then it just turns out to make a lot more sense to make changes in the personnel and we did rather a lot of that. We also reorganized the nature

of the central administration so as to create a central administration that would be far more receptive to local school initiatives, and local school interventions than would otherwise be the case

The major project in New York City that is the direct manifestation of this discussion we are having here is a project called the School Improvement Project. The School Improvement Project is an effort to intervene in a cross section of New York City schools directly. I have chosen a cross section of schools throughout all of the burroughs of New York City, and responded to choosing those schools by having retained and trained a group of men and women in the substantive and procedural import of those five characteristics. Typically each school is assigned one of these people who is called a school liaison person. The school liaison person's job is to walk the school and all of its people through a fairly self-conscious analysis which will illustrate the strength and weakness with respect to each of the characteristics to which I referred.

At the culmination of that process there is a document called a needs assessment document which says "School A" does not have the level of instructional leadership that is prerequisite for effective schooling and therefore one wants to do something or other. Or that "School A" has teachers who feel too insecure in their interpretation of the achievement data to use it as a basis for program modification for the coming year and so on it goes. The response to that is to deploy to each of the schools such technical assistance as will bring them upline with respect to each of the characteristics and only with respect to the characteristics. We will not discuss reduced class size, we will not discuss increased per pupil expenditure, we will not discuss permanent additions to the staff, we will not discuss major modifications of the physical plant. We will only discuss those aspects of school life that contribute as directly as possible to one or some of those school characteristics that I described a few moments ago.

The focus of the resource distribution is the distributing of resources that are technical in nature, temporary and described as such, and merely intended in sum to show the school how to better use the resources it already has on the presumption that the schools and those men and women who demonstrate the efficacy of the do-ability of what we are talking about here are not all that different. We are not talking about successful schools that got that way by tripling their per pupil expenditure or by halving their class size. We are talking about men and women who demonstrate the efficacy of these conclusions by functioning under fairly pedestrian inner city circumstances, serving what I have already tried to say are a garden variety of city children. And the only difference between the effective ones and the ineffective ones derives from the achievement outcomes that describe the rates of gain. And we are presuming now, in a fairly aggressive way, that the explanation does derive from the five characteristics to which I have referred.

Now Mike Cohen and others have pointed out that we don't really fully understand those five characteristics. That is we, for example, cannot rank order them. We cannot even tell you definitively that the explanation for the

school difference doesn't derive from the means by which they obtained the five characteristics. But, quite frankly, given what one is doing, I am not sure that we need to answer all of those questions in order to have a basis for proceeding to do something. I am especially happy that New York City is not the only school system that is trying to use the outcomes of this work because I think in some respects that places an unfair burden.

I feel very confident in research conclusions. What I am not all that confident about -- though I am not insecure or I wouldn't be doing it -- is the projected outcomes of the process that has been designed for the intervention. I never did that before. I made it up as I went along and I know there are people who spent as many years and at least as much time thinking about whether the process of intervention as we have spent trying to reach conclusions about what are the substantive differences that distinguish the two sets. I want to make very clear that I am interested in anything about the process of intervention. I certainly think it ought to be systematically paid attention to. And, in fact, a part of what I can promise is that.

Incidentally, the other major gesture that has occurred in New York City is that I did go to the national foundations and say to them that they haven't been to New York City since the 1960's and they ought to be. And if they were saving up their good offices for some symbolic gesture, now is as good a time as any. And since letters of endorsement from foundations that don't contain checks tend not to get read or at least read and not paid attention to, that the only thing that they could do that would really be helpful would be to give money. And I must say that the Ford Foundation, the Carnegie Corporation, the New York Foundation, and a number of others have, in fact, done that. A part of what allows me to experiment, particularly with the resource allocation question with respect to School Improvement Project does derive from subsidy that has been obtained from the foundations to which I refer. I might also point out to those of you who are lawabiding taxpayers, it also means that NIE gets a lot of intervention out of its support for what started out as a fairly modest study of the characteristics that were supposed to distinguish the two sets of schools.

But inevitably the interaction between the intervention in New York and the research which is still going on has, of course, gotten considerably broader. It is going to be very hard, when we do final reports to sharply distinguish between conclusions that derived from what we have been doing with research, as contrasted to what we have been doing with the intervention. But I just call that fringe benefit.

OTHER REFORM INITIATIVES IN NEW YORK CITY

There is incidentally another budget in New York City called local school development, which also passed because it is an effort at direct intervention in a cross section of New York City schools, but approaches the intervention from a very, very, different point of view. That is, it is a process of intervention predicated a good deal on self conscious design of process that has been the case, and what I do is obviously driven primarily by

substantive conclusions. Various local school development is a process of intervention driven much more by self conscious design namely the process of intervention themselves.

Let me close by describing one major initiative that is simply illustrative of what do you do beyond these self conscious kinds of things that are supposed to be exemplary or persuasive or something. What do you do if you are going to reform the whole enterprise.

One, for the first time since decentralization we have issued a standardized curriculum for all of the 1300 schools in the New York City public schools. Under decentralization in New York, moving a child from the third grade on Staten Island to a third grade in the Bronx meant that if there was any similarity between what was going on in the two places, it would either be coincidental or providential. And presumably that will no longer be the case. There is now for the first time since 1969 a single centralized description of the scope and sequence of teaching and learning in grades K through 9 inclusive.

I followed that then by devising what is called a promotional policy for the New York City public schools. The promotional policy says each child in grades K through 9 is required to meet certain minimum demonstrable standards of skills acquisition as a prerequisite to moving from that grade to the next grade.

Since New York City has decentralized, the primary administrative responsibility for enforcing those standards rests with the decentralized districts. And if you know that New York is divided into 32 districts of approximately 30,000 children each, each district elects its own local board. Each board hires his own local superintendent and their relationship with us is that we disseminate a standardized curriculum, we give them a budget from a centralized budget, we give them a teacher list to chose from, we give them a variety of rules and regulations of a system function of a very wide latitude and discretion about what happens in each of those 32 local districts. Therefore, for the requirement for enforcing the standard for promotion from first grade to the second grade, we have given them the standard that is written with great specificity. We have given them those standards for kindergarten, first grade, second grade and so on, but it rests with them to enforce it.

The other major characteristic of the promotional policy rests in two of its aspects. Aspect one being that I have said that the New York City schools will abandon its dependence on commercially prepared norm reference tests and will substitute locally generated, nationally validated criterion measures that derive from the standardized curriculum that has already been disseminated. Then I will follow that with the requirement that no matter what the local district does, pupil promotion in the fourth grade and the seventh grade would depend on pupil performance on these centrally administered, centrally scored set of criterion measures in reading and writing and

in the fourth grade and the seventh grade who do not obtain the minimum standard, may not be promoted independent of local teacher, local administrator, local district judgment.

And finally, any child that fails a promotion in the fourth grade and the seventh grade by virtue of this central requirement will have the opportunity to participate in a set of centrally-subsidized programs. If you fail children, they do not require you to have them repeat the work they just did. This has the effect of meaning if your child fails a promotion in June of either the fourth or the seventh grade, you may enroll them in a federally-subsidized summer school, if you wish, have them retested in August, if you wish, and if they pass the test in August, they can rejoin their classmates whom they might have left. If they do not meet the standard in September, they may not then go on to either the fifth grade or the eighth grade. They may, however, enroll in a course of study that is specifically designed to correct the deficiency that prevented the promotion, which deficiency may either be in writing or reading or math or some combination of those three.

And what we have to do is design a set of programs to respond to those particular deficiencies; but also, in the instance of which children failed a promotion because they didn't fail all three sets of tests, do something with the program that keeps them on line, on the one hand, but on the other hand, makes clear that they cannot go on.

The premise of all of this derives from sort of the mix between the pedagogical premises to which they were referred in the first place and the effort to translate them into the school program. Those premises are: that all children are educable, (at least all of the children I know about in this are educable and we have most kinds of children that I know about there); that their educability derives primarily from the nature of the school to which they are sent as contrasted to the nature of the family or neighborhood from which they come; and finally, children that start out not doing well in school get further and further behind the longer they go to school. And you have to stop that. So the question on the table for me is, since we are long past the opportunity to do these things in a piecemeal way, how do you intrude on the whole system all at once, if the objective is to stop the continuous movement of children who, for a variety of reasons are clearly not prepared to do academic work at each of the levels of schooling that will make them predictably successful at the next level of schooling.

Now, my description of these things, as I am sure you must recognize, is certainly abbreviated and oversimplified and certainly not exhaustive. But I do hope it is illustrative of what is going on in New York City, which is a very self-conscious and systematic effort to alter the dynamics of the whole of the enterprise in a way that brings it closer to what it is obligated to do for the children it is supposed to serve.

CONCLUSION

At this time, I will end this with a single recitation, because obviously a large part of this does go to the question: "If any structurally-effective schools exist at all, why aren't they everywhere?" And the explanation, in my judgment, is not a social science explanation. It is not a pedagogical explanation. It is a political explanation. It derives from the simple fact that our social order can do more about some people than it does about others.

And since all of you are even greater authorities on the exercise of social service than I am, it will not be difficult for you to see the import of the analogy. So I end this by saying that I live on Carroll Street in Parks Slope in Brooklyn. It is a lovely tree-lined street that is contiguous to Prospect Park. The street I live on is swept twice a day, four days a week. It is damned near antiseptic. Just a few blocks away from where I live, there are streets that go on for miles that aren't swept four times a year. They are a stereotypical exercise in urban filth, as in all manners of abuse, of deprivation, and so forth.

One is entitled to ask the question, "Why does New York City sweep some streets so much more often than it sweeps others?", which from my point of view is not all that different from asking, "Why do some schools serve children so much more effectively than others?" And my answer to the question is this: Education is a social service, that social servants serve those they think they must, and when they think they needn't, then they don't. And the key to what we are talking about here does not derive from the difference between what we know and what we don't know. It derives from our willingness to do something about what we do know.

Because, ultimately no matter what you think about the substance and import of this discussion, you must cope with that fact, or explain away the fact that there are, in fact, schools doing for these children precisely what ought to be done for them when they go to school and doing it under circumstances that presumably preclude it.

So all I can say to you is I hope that you feel as put-upon by our failures of social services as I do. And since, as I have said to you already, I am not absolutely secure about the processes that one ought to use in order to make advances in this area, at least I hope you will agree with me that whether or not we make any progress at all in moving education toward its capacity for equity would depend on how you feel about the fact that we haven't done that so far. Thank you.

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